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League of Canadian Poets

Press Release

League of Canadian Poets celebrates 13 poets shortlisted for annual book awards

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

TORONTO - The League of Canadian Poets is excited to announce three book award shortlists featuring 13 books of poetry published in 2024. Each award carries a \$2,000 prize for the winner, which will be announced on Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

The Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, for a debut book of poetry, is given in the memory of Gerald Lampert, an arts administrator who organized authors' tours and took a particular interest in the work of new writers.

The Pat Lowther Memorial Award is awarded in memory of the late Pat Lowther, whose career was cut short by her untimely death in 1975. As a women's prize, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award is inclusive of cis women, trans women, and non-binary writers who feel comfortable being recognized by a women's prize.

The Raymond Souster Award, which celebrates a new book of poetry by a League member, honors Raymond Souster, a founder of the League.

Award winners will be announced on Wednesday, May 14, 2025. An online reading will be held on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 8pm ET to celebrate the shortlisted poets.

Graphics, jury comments, author photos, and author bios can all be found at poets.ca/shortlist2025.

Shortlist details follow. **Please note author pronouns.**

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Gerald Lampert Memorial Award shortlist celebrates 6 debut books of poetry from 2024

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

TORONTO - The League of Canadian Poets is excited to announce the 2025 Gerald Lampert Memorial Prize shortlist, celebrating debut books of poetry published in 2024.

The Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, for a debut book of poetry, is given in the memory of Gerald Lampert, an arts administrator who organized authors' tours and took a particular interest in the work of new writers. The award carries a \$2,000 prize for the winner, which will be announced on Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

2025 Gerald Lampert Memorial Award shortlist:

The Seventh Town of Ghosts by Faith Arkorful (McClelland & Stewart)

Blood Belies by Ellen Chang-Richardson (Wolsak & Wynn)

Aqueous by Nathanael Jones (The Porcupine's Quill)

Dayo by Marc Perez (Brick Books)

Precedented Parroting by Barbara Tran (Palimpsest Press)

Scientific Marvel by Chimwemwe Undi (House of Anansi Press)

An online reading will be held on Tuesday, May 13 at 8pm ET featuring brief readings from shortlisted poets. Graphics, jury comments, author photos, author bios, and event details can all be found at poets.ca/shortlist2025.

The League of Canadian Poets is Canada's only national professional poetry organization. The League's mandate is to elevate the cultural significance of poetry and champion the role of poets. Working to nurture and expand poetry communities and audiences, the organization cultivates the local, national, and international publication, performance, and recognition of poetry. The League supports equitable and inclusive artistic practice through poetry education and development.

[For internal use only: please note author pronouns - Faith Arkorful, she/her; Ellen Chang-Richardson, they/them; Nathanael Jones, he/him; Marc Perez, he/him; Barbara Tran, she/her; Chimwemwe Undi, she/her]

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Pat Lowther Memorial Award shortlist celebrates 6 women poets

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

TORONTO - The League of Canadian Poets is excited to announce the 2025 Pat Lowther Memorial Prize shortlist, celebrating books of poetry authored by women and published in 2024.

The Pat Lowther Memorial Award is awarded in memory of the late Pat Lowther, whose career was cut short by her untimely death in 1975. As a women's prize, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award is inclusive of cis women, trans women, and non-binary writers who feel comfortable being recognized by a women's prize. The award carries a \$2,000 prize for the winner, which will be announced on Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

2025 Pat Lowther Memorial Award shortlist:

The Seventh Town of Ghosts by Faith Arkorful (McClelland & Stewart)

Heliotropia by Manahil Bandukwala (Brick Books)

Oh Witness Dey! by Shani Mootoo (Book*hug Press)

The Knot of My Tongue by Zehra Naqvi (McClelland & Stewart)

The Work by Bren Simmers (Gaspereau Press)

Precedented Parroting by Barbara Tran (Palimpsest Press)

An online reading will be held on Tuesday, May 13 at 8pm ET featuring brief readings from shortlisted poets. Graphics, jury comments, author photos, author bios, and event details can all be found at poets.ca/shortlist2025.

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[For internal use only: please note author pronouns - Faith Arkorful, she/her; Manahil Bandukwala, she/her; Shani Mootoo, she/her; Zehra Naqvi, she/her; Bren Simmers, she/her; Barbara Tran, she/her.]

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Raymond Souster Award shortlist celebrates 6 new books of poetry

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

TORONTO - The League of Canadian Poets is excited to announce the 2025 Raymond Souster Award shortlist, celebrating new books of poetry authored by League members and published in 2024.

The Raymond Souster Award, which celebrates a new book of poetry by a League member, honors Raymond Souster, a founder of the League. The award carries a \$2,000 prize for the winner, which will be announced on Wednesday, May 14, 2025.

2025 Raymond Souster Award longlist:

Heliotropia by Manahil Bandukwala (Brick Books)

The Knot of My Tongue by Zehra Naqvi (McClelland & Stewart)

echolalia echolalia by Jane Shi (Brick Books)

Weather by Rob Taylor (Gaspereau Press)

Scientific Marvel by Chimwemwe Undi (House of Anansi Press)

shima by shō yamagushiku (McClelland & Stewart)

An online reading will be held on Tuesday, May 13 at 8pm ET featuring brief readings from shortlisted poets. Graphics, jury comments, author photos, author bios, and event details can all be found at poets.ca/shortlist2025.

The League of Canadian Poets is Canada's only national professional poetry organization. The League's mandate is to elevate the cultural significance of poetry and champion the role of poets. Working to nurture and expand poetry communities and audiences, the organization cultivates the local, national, and international publication, performance, and recognition of poetry. The League supports equitable and inclusive artistic practice through poetry education and development.

[For internal use only: please note author pronouns - Manahil Bandukwala, she/her; Zehra Naqvi, she/her; Jane Shi, she/her; Rob Taylor, he/him; Chimwemwe Undi, she/her; shō yamagushiku, he/him.]

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Additional info: jury comments for shortlisted titles

The Seventh Town of Ghosts by Faith Arkorful (McClelland & Stewart)

“Navigating *The Seventh Town of Ghosts*, one can’t help but come away in awe of such a powerful and moving lyric voice. Here in its pages, we find grief, longing, and the will to survive embodied and tangibly real. Even in the wake of police violence, state injustice and betrayal, the speaker’s voice determinedly and profoundly carries us forward beneath the blanket of stars, haunted by the memories of people and places no longer here or left far behind. In a world that threatens to erase and diminish, these poems burn with so much life, movement, and incandescent beauty.” – Gerald Lampert Memorial Award jury

“*The Seventh Town of Ghosts* by Faith Arkoful is a reckoning in slow circles around family, forgiveness and the fundamental question of how to weigh a life. The collection artfully evolves intimate relationships and a deepening selfhood across a lifetime of revisited landscapes, shaped, in part, by startling, unexpected metaphoric turns on the sinister trickstering of state, police and other every-day violence and violation. Fully sensorial, earth-grounded and suffused with spirit, *The Seventh Town of Ghosts* meticulously etches a path of survival from origin to acceptance, laced with measures of hope held in delicate balance.” – Pat Lowther Memorial Award jury

Heliotropia by Manahil Bandukwala (Brick Books)

“Manahil Bandukwala’s *Heliotropia* undoes the estrangement of today’s chaotic everyday, quietly drawing the reader close, noticing, coaxing warmth and light from sharp angles and buried places. Moving gently, generously between the pulsing, visceral intimacies of personal and historic separation and splitting, wondrous, perplexing carnalities of an unfolding soul story, and galaxies that glory on beyond the digital chirp of our own atmospheric preoccupation, Bandukwala resolutely returns to the redemptive promise of joy, magic, love, ‘even after everything crumbled / and crumbled again.’” – Pat Lowther Memorial Award jury

“It’s an understatement to say it is difficult to write a good love poem and yet Bandukwala has given us a whole, shining book of them. *Heliotropia* is full-fledged, lyric blooming. This is poetry that is somehow both gentle and biting, reminding us of the continuous effort it takes to love amidst a multitude of griefs in the world. This exploration is a force, pulling the reader toward a future where, ‘something survived here, something that could be us.’” – Raymond Souster Award jury

***Blood Belies* by Ellen Chang-Richardson (Wolsak & Wynn)**

Fractal, fragmented, and richly complex in its exploration of the legacies of racism, erasure, and diaspora, *Blood Belies* is revelatory and stunning. Chang-Richardson's lyrical fragments traverse a vast ocean where history, family, and identity are not linear monoliths, but plural, rising and falling, wave after wave, in an endless cascade of reinvention and interrogation. In these pages, the voices of the forgotten and erased resurface time and again between lines and in the margins, refusing silence.

***Aqueous* by Nathanael Jones (The Porcupine's Quill)**

Aqueous is exactly that: moving like water through itself, through identity and history and time. The poems of *Aqueous* are at once ungrounded and deeply rooted, asking questions of the reader, of the reader's world, of the reader's history, asking: have you considered? Did you know? From the liminal and into the body, *Aqueous* flows through language in its telling, in its asking, and flows powerfully off the page in this striking debut book of poetry.

***Oh Witness Dey!* by Shani Mootoo (Book*hug Press)**

Shani Mootoo's *Oh Witness Dey!* is a virtuoso collection that confronts colonial histories with clarity, boldness, and visceral craft. Akin to both folk song and epic canvas, the work challenges traditional forms while giving voice to the displaced and the silenced. Mootoo merges personal ancestry with global memory—and diaspora with resilience—compelling readers to reflect on the tenacious, transformative effects of rootlessness, representation, and historical violence.

***The Knot of My Tongue* by Zehra Naqvi (McClelland & Stewart)**

"Zehra Naqvi's *The Knot of my Tongue* recalls and rebirths the forgotten and the unspoken. From ancestral bloodlettings to the slow, grim furl of brothers becoming men against an ongoing backdrop of tyranny and violence on repeat, Naqvi threads the ancient with the present, the estoric with the primal, filling longstanding silences surrounding familiar women with perplexed paths and intricate, immediate personhood. *The Knot of my Tongue* is a fresh, adroit testimony both to memory itself and to the brave, crucial and urgently necessary act of remembering, its enduring promise of connection across exile, loss and the many faces of solitude." – Pat Lowther Memorial Award jury

"*The Knot of My Tongue* is the feast after the fast, a nourishing debut that floods love and remembrance and identity into every waiting crack and hollow. Naqvi's poems are generational prayers and stories uttered with a clarity and tenderness that invite her readers to fulfill, instead, the elevated role of witnessing. This collection is an intimate, incisive, and deservedly self-assured gift of voice and story." – Raymond Souster Award jury

***Dayo* by Marc Perez (Brick Books)**

Dayo is a collection that documents each moment as it passes. It is lush and animate in describing the mundane, gentle in its nostalgia and reflections of home, and sharp in its commentary on enclosures and borders. Each word is a seed of complex sensory images that sprout through the page to find connections across the book. These poems are elegant in the way they consider how fleeting each moment really is, while being deeply rooted in the possibilities of a good life. It is a nourishing and sturdy achievement.

echolalia echolalia by Jane Shi (Brick Books)

echolalia echolalia is a collection of poems that constantly twists and strives toward a shifting light. It tends to structure in a way that is at times particular and reassuring, and at other times a fascinating and feral reordering of voice and vision. Shi writes like a pretty splinter in your soft flesh: her poems are sharp, urging your attention, lingering as a sweet ache that your body remembers even when the sliver is gone.

The Work by Bren Simmers (Gaspereau Press)

Bren Simmers' *The Work* is a fearless and meticulously crafted exploration of grief, love, and the quiet weight of mourning. Through daring omissions and deliberate weavings—guided by singular vision and masterful restraint—Simmers turns a rhythmic assemblage of losses into a space for deep, transformative engagement. Moving beyond mere depiction, this unflinching collection fully embodies the descent and disintegration wrought by terminal illness, dementia, and death, and offers a resonant shared experience of human fragility and endurance.

Weather by Rob Taylor (Gaspereau Press)

A stunning collection of haiku and haiku-adjacent poems that are both disarming and endearing in their tenderness, clarity, and restraint. Honest and sensitive without ever reaching for sentimentality, these bite-size poems magnify racoon prints in the sand or “every bulb / of the blackberry” until they are not only worthy of our attention, but of our praise. A refreshing celebration of existence.

Precedented Parroting by Barbara Tran (Palimpsest Press)

“The poetry of *Precedented Parroting* is phenomenal, and the craft of the book itself is astonishing. With this debut, Tran faces stereotypes fearlessly, with a conviction matched keenly by rhythmic, moving language and images. *Precedented Parroting* swoops, soars, and shape-shifts, navigating both individual and collective grief, memory, and nature: from its smallest lines to the full experience of reading cover-to-cover, Tran's debut book of poetry will leave readers touched and inspired, and keenly awaiting what may come next.” – Gerald Lampert Memorial Award jury

“In *Precedented Parroting*, Barbara Tran reveals a refractive exploration of memory, migration, and resilience. Her poems ascend with the transmuted energy of a flock of birds in flight. Conjuring and navigating the conjugations of Vietnamese diaspora experience, Tran confronts trauma and anti-Asian/anti-Avian violence head-on. With wingspans as lines, this work carries personal and collective grief toward the resonance of chia buồn. Crafted with precision and care, and marked by clarity and emotional depth, *Precedented Parroting* is a powerful testament to identity and survival.” – Pat Lowther Memorial Award jury

Scientific Marvel by Chimwemwe Undi (House of Anansi Press)

“Scientific Marvel is a collection that centres wonder. There are poems here of every kind, brought together in a nest for the things most deserving of care. This book attends to every detail as it ranges across stories of the body, of family, of loved ones, of the city and the country and the land. It is joyful and funny while ruminating on birds and climate change, thorough and precise while honoring justice in archives of injustice, and tender as it looks out to the sky and the distances of space.” – Gerald Lampert Memorial Award jury

“Equal parts personal and political, demanding and accessible, sweeping and specific, *Scientific Marvel* remarks on our modern settings and our sense of self with formal experimentation and a command of language as unique and nuanced as the multitudinous places it inhabits. This is a book that dares to encapsulate so many of contemporary life’s most pressing issues, doing so with a sharp wit and an inventive style. A striking debut from a prescient new poetic voice.” – Raymond Souster Award jury

shima by shō yamagushiku (McClelland & Stewart)

In an inquisitive and dreamy debut, yamagushiku wades into the waters of collective memory and displacement. What kind of understanding is possible between those exiled and those left behind, between diaspora and home, between ancestors and descendants? The poet remarks, “you are never undertaken all at once and never once and for all,” delicately braiding what is unknowable with what can be felt, connected, and remembered.